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ABSTRACT

Sequencing in adventure education involves putting activities in an order appropriate to the needs of the group. Contrary to the common assumption that each adventure sequence is unique, a review of literature concerning five sequencing models reveals a certain universality. These models present sequences that move through four phases: group formation, group challenge, group support, and group achievement. These phases are compared to four stages of group development found in a meta-analysis of 50 studies of groups. These stages are termed: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Other research clearly indicates that various sequences have differing effects on the development of teamwork and on the development of group cohesion. It is asserted that debates over the uniqueness versus universality of sequencing and over the benefits of flexibility versus fixed planning create a false dichotomy. A planning continuum is suggested that allows for three distinct levels of sequences. At the flexible end of the continuum, the "micro-sequence" or individual adventure activity could be modified at any time in response to group needs. At the fixed-planning end of the continuum, the "macro-sequence" would plan the order of activity categories that catalyze the social-maturation phases of the group. In the middle of the continuum, the "meso-sequence" would involve choosing activities appropriate to each group phase. (Contains 26 references and 4 tables.) (SV)

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Sequencing Adventure Activities: A New Perspective

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We must remember that the most important thing is sequencing.
Then, we must remember that there is no sequence.

Dr. Tom Smith

Anyone modestly concerned with transmitting information is intuitively aware of the importance of sequencing. For example, when writing a letter, an article, or a book, it is easier for the reader to understand what is being presented if the written information is organized in a logical and sequential manner. Lectures, presentations, and lessons abide by the same rule.

This omnipresence of "sequences" in our lives exists for a good reason. One could argue that because of the way we understand and perceive time, we are bound to a linear perception of what happens around us. Hence the contention that we will always experience life in a successive order of events, words, and thoughts.

Despite the fact that events are compelled to occur in a linear fashion (i.e., past, present, and future), we can plan the sequence of these events before it occurs and therefore take some control over the way we transmit information.

Perhaps the most universal and commonly used sequence is the classic "story line" sequence which includes a beginning, a middle, and an end. Sequences are often seen as incremental, they exist in linear model, from simple to complex and vice versa, or in a circular model, from general to specific then back to general. For whatever reason a specific sequence is adopted, the bottom line is that sequences are an intrinsic part of human development. Educators certainly do not escape this reality. Since education often involves transmitting information or presenting experiences, whether we want to admit it or not, sequencing plays an important role in our profession.

Uniqueness or Universality

Sequencing in adventure education has been defined as the act of "paying attention to the order of activities so that the order is appropriate to the needs of the group" (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988, p. 35). The literature also suggests that one of the most important programming components of an adventure-based learning experience is the selection of activities and the order in which these are presented (Anderson & Frison, 1992; Nadler & Luckner, 1992; Roland & Havens, 1981; Priest, 1996; Rohnke, 1989; Rohnke & Butler, 1995; Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988; Smith, 1991).

Consequently, specialists and practitioners in this field tend to agree that adventure activities should be sequenced in a logical manner in order to reach specific educational goals (Bisson, 1997). In addition, a variety of authors have addressed not only the importance of sequencing, but also the common belief regarding the uniqueness of each adventure sequence.

For instance, Schoel, Prouty, and Radcliffe (1988) argued that "a good sequence for one group may not work for another. There is no exact formula" (p. 77). Like Schoel et al., (1988), several other authors have expressed the importance of customizing a sequence specific to the nature and needs of each group (Smith, Roland, Havens, & Hoyt, 1992; Rohnke, 1989; Rohnke & Butler, 1995). In essence, the popular argument is that there is no magical recipe for sequencing—each group requires a unique and customized set of activities.

However, when we look carefully at few of the most commonly known prescribed sequences in our literature, apparent similarities can be found in their overall progression. What is even more astonishing is that these similarities exist even though the prescribed sequences were originally customized for different populations such as people with disabilities (Roland & Havens, 1983), patients in mental health institutions (Roland, Summers, Friedman, Barton, & McCarty, 1987a; Roland, Keene, Dubois, & Lentini, 1987b), children with behavioral disorders (Robb & Ewert, 1987), youth in counseling programs (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988), adult corporate training programs (Priest, Attarian, & Schubert, 1993), and general populations (Rohnke, 1989).

This last observation somehow contradicts the common assumption regarding the uniqueness of each sequence. Consequently, a dilemma arises between "uniqueness" and "universality"of sequencing adventure activities. On one hand, it is argued that program planning should remain flexible to allow for customization, yet on the other hand, it seems that a certain universality exists between sequences prescribed for distinct groups.

In my opinion, both conditions often coexist. However, before explaining this position on sequencing adventure activities, I believe it is important to look more carefully at the prescribed sequence models that shared the observed universality. Table 1 presents the different proposed sequencing models that were reviewed for this paper.

Table 1

Proposed Sequencing Models in Adventure Programming

Roland & Havens (1983)	**Roland et al. (1987b)**	**Robb & Ewert (1987)**	**Schoel et al. (1988)**	**Priest et al. (1993)**
Awareness Activities	Goal Setting	Goal Setting	Ice Breaker/ Acquaintance Activities	Goal Setting
⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩
Group Cooperative Games	Awareness Activities	Awareness Activities	Deinhibitizer	Socialization Games Familiarization Deinhibition
⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩
Individual Initiative Tasks	Trust Activities	Trust Activities	Trust/Empathy Activities	Group Initiatives Team Tools Team Tasks
⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩
Group Initiative Tasks	Group Problem Solving	Cooperative Activities	Communication Activities	Ropes Courses Low (spotted) High (belayed)
⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩
High Adventure Activities	Individual Problem Solving (Low/High Ropes Course)	Problem Solving	Decision-Making/ Problem Solving	Outdoor Pursuits Activity-Based Wilderness-Based
	⇩	⇩	⇩	
	Adventure Experiences	Group Challenges	Social Responsibility	
		⇩	⇩	
		Adventure Activities	Personal Responsibility	

Common Phases Among Prescribed Sequences

If we look carefully at Table 1, an universality can be found across all of the prescribed adventure sequences. As expressed at the beginning of this paper, it is my contention that all of these prescribed sequences share similarities in their progression. To enhance these similarities, I have classified the various categories of adventure activity into four large, group-related, phases. Table 2 illustrates this classification model.

The model includes the following group-related phases: (a) group formation, (b) group challenge, (c) group support, and (d) group achievement. Each of these phases represents a distinct activity focus. An analysis of these focus areas will help clarify the nomenclature used to identify the phases.

Group Formation. Phase one of the classification refers to categories of activities such as goal setting, awareness, cooperative games, trust, communication, ice breaker, deinhibitizer, and socialization games. The focus of this phase is quite apparent. All of the activities used at the beginning of the prescribed sequences are designed to help the members of a new group get acquainted with each other. Their progressive set of activities allows the participants to experience fun in a safe social environment. In addition, some of the initial activities are purposefully designed to develop trust and communication skills among participants.

Group Challenge. The second phase includes activities that are designed to challenge the group. Various appellations, such as group initiative tasks, group problem solving, group challenges, decision making/problem solving, and team tasks, are used to identify activities that present the group with physical or mental challenges. To resolve these challenges, the group must make decisions while cooperatively recognizing the need for leadership and followership. All of the prescribed sequences presented have included this type of category of activities. Most of them were introduced before the personal challenge activities and after the initial group formation activities. Only two prescribed sequences, the Sequential Process (Roland & Havens, 1983) and the Challenge Education Sequence (Robb & Ewert, 1987) introduce their set of group challenge activities after having led the group through a series of personal challenges. All other prescribed sequences introduce the personal challenge activities after the group challenge phase.

Group Support. The personal challenge activities encountered in the low and high ropes course events are often used at the end or near the end of an adventure program. It seems that the prescribed sequences have all included this category of activities in the last segment of their progression. Professionals in this field have called it individual initiative tasks, high adventure activities, individual problem solving, social and individual responsibility, or simply, low and high ropes activities. Regardless of their appellation, these categories of activities are quite similar because they require not only self-confidence and determination from the participant, but also psychological support and compassion on the group's part. Given that this study was mainly concerned with the development of group cohesion, the term "group support" was chosen to indicate this particular phase in the adventure sequence.

Group Achievement. The final phase of the model is used to represent the category of activities that extends the adventure into the realm of traditional outdoor pursuit activities. This may include short-term canoeing, backpacking, and/or mountaineering expeditions, to name a few. The categories are titled adventure experiences, adventure activities, and activity-based or wilderness-based pursuits activities. Because these activities require more time and commitment from the participants, they are not present in all of the prescribed sequences. However, when present, they are invariably placed at the end of the experience.

The phases I have just described summarize the progressions suggested by the most commonly prescribed sequences. These phases are principally concerned with the various developmental stages that a group will experience as the adventure program unfolds. The phases could be regrouped into three large groupings: (a) the "group formation" and "group challenge" phases are group-oriented activities which are introduced at the beginning of the sequences, (b) the "group support" phase is a collection of individual-oriented activities which are introduced near the end of the sequences, (c) the final "group achievement" phase which involves traditional outdoor pursuit activities and/or expedition type experiences are another group-oriented set of activities which are introduced at the end of the sequences.

Sequencing Group Development

Adventure programming has often been associated with small group development (Ewert, 1992; Kerr & Gass, 1995) and team building (Bronson, Gibson, Kichar, & Priest, 1992; Priest, 1996). Whether the goals of the adventure program focus on skill development or social growth, or have a therapeutical application, groups participating in these programs often experience various stages of group development (Kerr & Gass, 1995).

Table 2

Classification Model of the Most Commonly Prescribed Adventure Activity Sequences Categories

	Group Formation	Group Challenge	Group Support	Group Achievement
SP **Roland & Havens** **(1983)**	Awareness Activities Group Cooperative Games	Group Initiative Tasks*	Individual Initiatives Tasks High Adventure Activities	
ECP **Roland et al.** **(1987b)**	Goal Setting Awareness Activities Trust Activities	Group Problem Solving	Individual Problem Solving (Low/High Ropes Course)	Adventure Experiences
CES **Robb & Ewert** **(1987)**	Goal Setting Awareness Activities Trust Activities Cooperative Activities	Group Challenge*	Problem Solving	Adventure Activities
PAS **Schoel et al.** **(1988)**	Ice Breaker and Acquaintance Deinhibitizer Trust and Empathy Communication Activities	Decision-Making and Problem Solving	Social Responsibility Individual Responsibility	
CAT **Priest et al.** **(1993)**	(Socialization Games) Familiarization Deinhibition Team Tools	(Group Initiatives) Team Tasks	(Ropes Courses) Low (spotted) High (belayed)	(Outdoor Pursuits) Activity-Based Wilderness-Based

*Indicates that this category of activity is not placed according to its chronological position in its respective prescribed sequence.

SP = Sequential Process; ECP = Experiential Challenge Program; CES = Challenge Education Sequence; PAS = Project Adventure Sequence; CAT = Corporate Adventure Training Sequence

Group development was defined by Sarri and Galinsky (1974) as "changes through time in the internal structures, processes, and culture of the group" (p. 72). In addition, Sarri and Galinsky (1974) offered three dimensions to the changes in the life of a group: (a) social organization of the group (i.e., changes in the patterns of participants status among the group); (b) activities, tasks, and operative processes of the group (i.e., changes in the decision-making processes inside the group); and (c) culture of the group (i.e., norms, expectations, values, and purposes shared by the group members). These dimensions are important not only because they change during the life of a group, but because the members undergo these changes with a certain regularity. In fact, these changes are considered so recurrent that they can be classified into phases or stages of development (Sarri & Galinsky, 1974).

Many stages of group development models have been proposed. The models have varied from three to eight stages of development (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Still, despite the lack of consensus between the models, like the different prescribed adventure sequences, the group development models share some obvious similarities (Tuckman, 1965).

Tuckman reviewed fifty studies on group development which had been conducted with a variety of groups (e.g., therapy-groups, T-groups, natural, and laboratory groups). After a thorough classification process which included variables such as: (a) setting in which the studies were conducted, (b) the social realm in which the group behavior fell at any point during the life of the group, and (c) the position of the group in a hypothetical developmental sequence or stage of development, Tuckman eventually identified four stages of development common to all small group experiences. He called these stages forming, storming, norming, and performing.

Forming. During the forming stage, the participants usually experience a period of uncertainty in which they try to determine their status with the group and the group's norms (Tuckman, 1965). Some members search for leadership amidst confusion and anxiety. There is more of a willingness to please each other at this stage than during the storming stage.

Storming. During the storming stage, the participants engage themselves in interpersonal conflict as some of them might resist the influence of the group (Tuckman, 1965). During this stage, while reacting to situations with little independence or initiative, group members may show negative behaviors and test the limits of the leaders (Schoel et al., 1988).

Norming. During the norming stage, the participants establish a greater level of cohesiveness and commitment towards group cooperation and task accomplishment. The members of the group accepts the establishment of new group norms and appropriate behaviors (Tuckman, 1965). Now the group begins to use its own strengths and to take pride in its accomplishments. Members become more independent and willing to work towards accomplishing goals (Schoel et al., 1989).

Performing. In the performing stage, the participants are able to perform tasks with proficiency and flexibility (Tuckman, 1965). The unified group members compliment each other by using the strengths of all members (Schoel et al., 1989).

Finally, Tuckman's developmental sequence is subject to some conditions that will influence the rate of progression through the stages. One of these conditions relates to the duration of the group's life. Groups that form for only a few hours a day or a week will progress slower in the developmental sequence than those that are formed and remain as such for several consecutive days. Another condition influencing the rate of progression is the specificity of the task performed. Conditions of intense experimental control might increase the rate of development while a group left on its own without specific tasks to accomplish might take longer. Even though Tuckman (1965) identified these conditions and their influence on the rate of progression, he did not specify the duration for each phase or the entire process.

Research on Sequencing and Teamwork

Priest's (in print) study on sequencing and teamwork clearly indicated the effect of sequencing on the development of teamwork among adults. Using a series of variations on the Corporate Adventure Training (CAT) sequence, Priest designed a study that tested 8 different sequences. Figure 1 illustrates the variations performed on the CAT sequence.

Priest found that all subgroups improved their teamwork as a result of the ten week CAT program. Improvement ranged from 50% to 70% on a 100% scale. Variation in the degree of teamwork improvement was attributed to the order of activities. Priest, then, indicated that teamwork in some subgroups began to improve immediately while in others it started with a slight decline before increasing. He concluded that:

G	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	A	GSI	Class	Social	Tools	Tests	Low	High	O'ing	Rapp	APC
	B	GSI	Social	Tools	Tests	Low	High	O'ing	Rapp	Class	APC
	C	GSI	Tools	Tests	Low	High	O'ing	Rapp	Class	Social	APC
	D	GSI	Tests	Low	High	O'ing	Rapp	Class	Social	Tools	APC
	E	GSI	Low	High	O'ing	Rapp	Class	Social	Tools	Tests	APC
	F	GSI	High	O'ing	Rapp	Class	Social	Tools	Tests	Low	APC
	G	GSI	O'ing	Rapp	Class	Social	Tools	Tests	Low	High	APC
	H	GSI	Rapp	Class	Social	Tools	Tests	Low	High	O'ing	APC

G	=	Group	W	=	Week
GSI	=	Goal Setting and Introduction	Low	=	Low Ropes Course
Class	=	Classroom Lectures	High	=	High Ropes Course
Social	=	Socialization Game	O'ing	=	Orienteering Course
Tools	=	Group Initiative Tools	Rapp	=	Rappelling
Tests	=	Group Initiative Tests	APC	=	Action Planning and Closure

Figure 1. Variations on the CAT Sequence.

> The greatest gains in teamwork were achieved from the group-oriented activities like socialization, group initiative tools and tests, and low ropes course with spotting [group support]. Individually-oriented activities, such as high ropes courses, orienteering and rappelling, were powerful adjuncts to the group-oriented activities, provided they followed in sequence and did not precede the later.

So in Priest's study, sequence B displayed the most uniformity and greatest increase in teamwork with activities such as socialization, group initiative tools, group initiative tests, and the low ropes course displaying significant differences at $p<.05$ in Post Hoc comparison. These findings are important because they are the first to support the assumption that the sequencing of adventure activities can have either a positive or a detrimental effect on the way adventure program participants develop teamwork skills and attitudes.

Research on Sequencing and Group Cohesion

In 1997, a panel of 25 professionals in adventure education was used to establish a "hypothetically-correct sequence" (Bisson). Using a modified Delphi questionnaire, Bisson invited scholars and practitioners on this panel to develop a "hypothetically-correct sequence" that would promote the development of group cohesion among 6 grade students participating in a 5-day residential outdoor adventure program.

After three rounds, the modified Delphi questionnaire indicated that the following sequence of categories of activities could be accepted as a "hypothetically-correct sequence." This sequence of categories of adventure activities was:

1) Acquaintance Activities
2) Deinhibitizer Activities
3) Communication Activities
4) Trust Activities
5) Group Problem Solving Activities
6) Individual Low Ropes Course Events
7) Individual High Ropes Course Events
8) Outdoor Pursuit Experience

Bisson's study was twofold. First, it established a "hypothetically-correct sequence," and second, it measured the effects of this sequence on the development of group cohesion among students participating in a traditional outdoor adventure program. Group co-

hesion results for the "hypothetically-correct sequence" were also compared to the results from a group that received an "altered sequence" and a control group that participated in an environmental education residential program.

In the second phase, the Group Development Assessment (GDA) questionnaire developed by Jones and Bearley (1994) was used to determine the level of group cohesion among subjects. The GDA included four phases identified as "dependency," "conflict," "cohesion," and "interdependence." Of those, only the mean scores of the cohesion phase were used for data analysis.

Bisson's finding suggested that the "hypothetically-correct sequence" appears to be effective at developing group cohesion among participants. Although the "altered sequence" was effective at developing group cohesion, it was significantly less effective than the "hypothetically-correct sequence." Finally, it appears that participating in a residential outdoor adventure program was more effective at developing group cohesion than participating in an environmental education program.

The Multi-layer Sequence Model

Bisson (1997) research reveals four important observations. First, it indicated that sequencing was perceived as one of the most important programming factors in adventure-based learning. Second, it pointed out the generalized belief that adventure sequencing could not be reduced to one ultimate or universal sequence. Third, it also demonstrated that most prescribed sequences, although different in length, nature, and context, share some common developmental phases. And fourth, it reported that appropriate sequencing has a direct effect on the development of teamwork (Priest, in print) and group cohesion (Bisson, 1997).

Nevertheless, it appears the debate between "uniqueness" and "universality" in sequencing adventure activities is still the subject of a profound contention. It is my opinion that these two perspectives create a false dichotomy that keeps the debate lingering and unresolved. Hence, we must entertain an alternative about sequencing.

The argument for flexibility has merit because, evidently, each adventure learning group is composed of people with different personalities and is the subject of particular group dynamics. It is therefore reasonable to tend toward keeping the sequence as flexible as possible so as to adjust the type and order of activities to the needs of each group.

On the other hand, the concept of "universality" has not only been demonstrated between various prescribed sequences in our field, it also has been supported by numerous research on small group dynamics. These studies suggest that most newly-formed groups will experience a series of behavioral phases that are predictable and common to the social maturity of any group.

From this rationalization, a new theory emerges which can be explained as follows. Adventure programming can be composed of three distinct types of sequences, each operating at a different level in a planning continuum. At one end of the continuum one would find a level of "flexible planning" that relates to the "micro-sequence." The other end of the continuum would contain a level of "fixed planning" relating to the "macro-sequence." While the middle of the continuum would contain a level of "mixed planning" corresponding to the "meso-sequence" (See Figure 2).

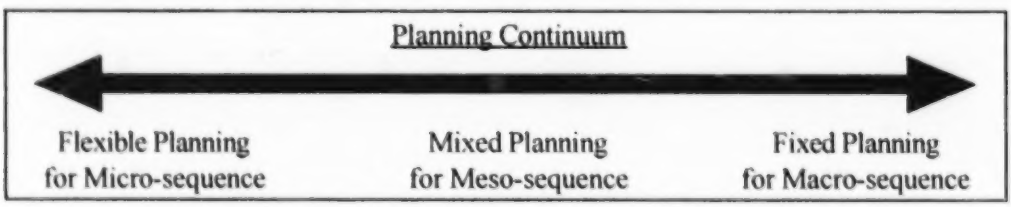

Figure 2. The Planning Continuum in Adventure Programming.

The Micro-Sequence would refer to the adventure activity per se (e.g., "spider's web," "tension traverse," "human knot" etc). This sequence would be flexible in nature and could be modified at any time by the adventure educator in response to the needs of a particular group.

The Macro-Sequence would represent the phases the group experiences throughout its development. These phases were introduced earlier in this paper as: (a) group formation, (b) group challenge, (c) group support, and (d) group achievement. These phases, representing the "macro-sequence" itself, would imply that some categories of adventure activities should be integrated and introduced in a specific order according to the social development of the group. In other words, the "macro-sequence" would include a fixed plan

of categories of adventure activities that would operate as catalyzers for the social maturation of a group. This would also mean that because of its rigidity, no phase of the "macro-sequence" could be bypassed.

To further justify the concept of the macro sequence, it is possible to compare it to current theories and models of small-group studies. As it stands, the "macro-sequence," matches Tuckman's (1965) small-group development theory. Table 3 presents the parallels between these two models.

Table 3
The Macro Sequence and Tuckman's Small Group Development Phases

Macro-sequence	Group Formation	Group Challenge	Group Support	Group Achievement
Tuckman's Theory	Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing

The Meso-Sequence would include all of the categories of adventure activities (i.e., "acquaintance activities," "deinhibitizer activities," "communication activities," "trust activities," "group problem solving activities," "individual low ropes course events," "individual high ropes course events," and "outdoor pursuits experience"). These categories could be grouped according to their respective and predominant educational purpose and placed within the appropriate phase in the "macro-sequence." This sequence would be arranged during the initial planning but, if needed, it should be flexible enough for the group to revisit certain categories of activities within a certain phase in the "macro-sequence." This combination of flexibility and structure allows for a unique level of mixed planning within the "meso-sequence".

As illustrated in Table 4, the macro sequence progresses horizontally moving in phases from group formation to challenge, support, and achievement. Under each phase, the "meso-sequence" of categories of adventure activities is introduced in a vertical fashion with double arrows to indicate that the categories of activities within a phase can be revisited as needed. It is important to note that, currently, the order of categories of activities within the group formation phase and the group support phase is based on the results of the development of a "hypothetically-correct sequence" (Bisson).

Finally, the "micro-sequence," with a double headed arrow, indicates that the activities for the selected category of adventure activities could be presented with no particular order, hence illustrating the flexibility of the micro sequence.

Conclusion

This paper presented in its opening, a popular remark from Tom Smith. Smith often said that sequencing is the most important thing but that there was no sequence. After reviewing Priest and Bisson studies on sequencing and small-group research, it seems that Smith is right when asserting that sequencing is an important programming component of any adventure-based curriculum. Moreover, if we accept the multi-layer sequence model we can also accept Simth's argument that "there is no sequence." Since it is quite possible that Smith was referring to the micro-sequence when arguing that there is no "magical sequence," it is then possible to subscribe to his remark on sequencing.

Although the model proposed in this paper helps alleviate the dissonance between rigid planning and flexible planning, more studies on sequencing are needed to confirm or refute the proposed model. In addition, more inquiries are needed to see if sequencing has also an effects on other popular programming outcomes such as trust building, problem-solving skills, leadership skills.

Table 4

The Relationship Between the Macro-Sequence, the Meso-Sequence, and the Micro-Sequence in Adventure Programming

	Adventure Programming			
Macro-sequence (Fixed Planning)	Group Formation →	Group Challenge →	Group Support →	Group Achievement
Meso-sequence (Mixed Planning)	Acquaintance Activities ↕ Deinhibitizer Activities ↕ Communication Activities ↕ Trust Activities	Group Problem Solving Activities	Individual Low Ropes Course Events ↕ Individual High Ropes Course Events	Outdoor Pursuit Experience
Micro-sequence (Flexible Planning)	Examples of Deinhibitizer Activities: "Mirror Image" ↕ "Circle the Circle" ↕ "Speed Rabbit" ↕ "The Samurai"	Examples of Group Problem Solving Activities: "Spider's Web" ↕ "Nitro Crossing" ↕ "The Meuse" ↕ "The Wall"	Examples of Low Ropes Course Events: "Tension Traverse" ↕ "Fidget Ladder" ↕ "Swinging Log" ↕ "Hickory Jump"	Examples of Outdoor Pursuit Experiences: "Backpacking Expedition" ↕ "Canoe Expedition" ↕ "Biking Expedition" ↕ "Ski Expedition"

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